



Sermon on the Mount Series

PROMISE KEEPING

Avoid breaking promises by making few promises

Course Text: Matthew 5:33-37

The theme of the 5th chapter of the Sermon on the Mount is to avoid moving in the direction of sin. Jesus is encouraging His listeners that they can avoid sinning by not allowing themselves to get close to it. In Matthew 5:33-37 He is teaching that we can avoid breaking our promises by making few enough promises that we can keep them.

Outline

Lesson Topic

Lesson 1 - Making Promises

Lesson 2 - Promises of God

Lesson 3 - Breaking Promises

Lesson 4 - Keeping the Promise



Suggested methodology for each course:

1. Allow time for greetings and fellowship (Save most of this for the end of class.)
2. Take prayer requests (Try to keep it from becoming a competition to see who has the most or the worst.)
3. Pray (The idea here is to leave our troubles with God so we can give His word our attention with a clear mind.)
4. Read the text aloud from the Bible one question at a time.
5. Answer and briefly discuss the "fill in the blank" questions. Let those who prefer to listen, listen. My answers on the next page are just one opinion; you may have a better answer. Repeat 4 & 5 for all questions except the "Think & Pray" questions.
6. On the final "Think & Pray" question everyone should take a few minutes to pray over it and jot down their own thoughts before the discussion. **This gives the Holy Spirit a time to speak, so don't rush it.** The class leader should watch for the pencils and pens to quit moving. Others can look at the "For Further Thought" questions while waiting for everyone to finish.
7. Discuss your "Think & Pray" answers. Never force anyone to share theirs. As with the other questions, my answer, when provided, are just one more opinion; you may have a better answer.
8. Close in prayer (It is best to call on others to pray, but try to get their permission ahead of time.)
9. Fellowship (Leave this as open ended as possible for the time and place you meet.)

Depending on the number of people, each lesson is expected to take about one hour. Steps 4 thru 7 are about half of that. If you take longer, let each lesson take more than one meeting, or consider breaking into two groups. If you take less time, extra questions are provided for discussion called "For Further Thought"

The last lesson is very short but it has several "Think & Pray" questions concerning the entire course to make up for it.

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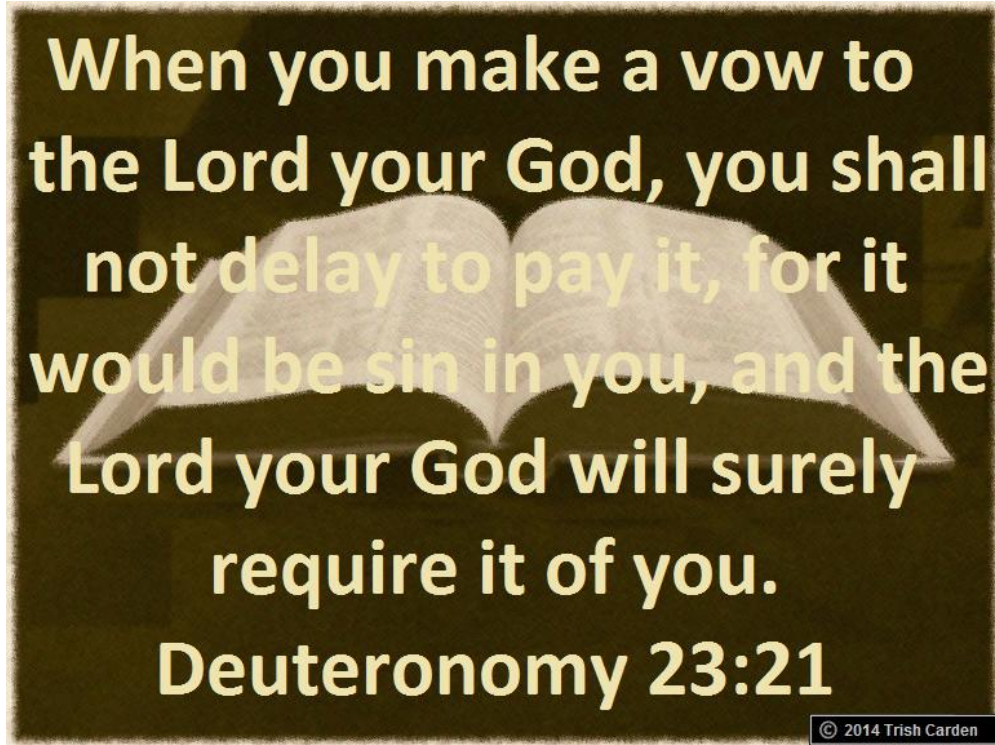
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Lesson 1 - Making Promises

There are about 30 biblical references to vows, most of which are from the Old Testament. The books of Leviticus and Numbers have several references to vows in relation to offerings and sacrifices. There were dire consequences for the Israelites who made and broke promises, especially vows to God.

Please read Deuteronomy 23:21-23 and answer these questions: (a vow is just another word for promise)



[1A] How long should you wait after making a promise before you keep it? _____

[1B] Is it a sin to not make a promise? _____

[1C] What should we careful to do just as if it were a vow to God? _____

Please read Numbers 30:2 and answer this question:

[1D] What two things are supposed to be exactly the same?
_____ and _____

Please read Matthew 5:33-37 and answer these questions:

[1E] What were the ancients told? _____

[1F] When we promise what should we swear by? _____

[1G] According to James 5:12 should we swear at all? _____

We've all been the victim of broken promises. You are counting on someone and they let you down. She said she would and she doesn't. He promises to pay you back and you never see it again.

[1H] What are some examples of broken promises someone made to you that really disappointed you?

Think and Pray _____

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 1 - Making Promises

- [1A] How long should you wait before you keep a promise? Do not delay. ASAP Dt 23:21
[1B] Is it a sin to not make a promise? No Dt 23:22
[1C] What should we careful to do just as if it were a vow to God? Whatever we say Dt 23:23
[1D] What two things are supposed to be exactly the same? What we say and what we do Nm 30:2
[1E] What were the ancients told? To keep their word, their promises Mt 5:33
[1F] When we promise what should we swear by? Nothing Mt 5:34-36
[1G] According to James 5:12 should we swear at all? No Jm 5:12 and Mt 5:37

[1H] Conversation over heard from the back seat on the way home from church. The Sunday School lesson that morning had been about Satan.

Little Sister: "The Devil sounds really scary. Do you think he is real?"

Slightly Older Brother: "Don't worry about it. It's probably like Santa Claus. Our parents will turn out to be him."

Little kids are funny aren't they? It is terrible when their lives are messed up by adults. We had a situation when my children were little, where a little girl had to stay with us a lot. Both of her parents were strung out on drugs and various households in the family sort of took turns keeping the little girl. It was a terrible thing to watch. The worst part was the broken promises.

Mom says, "I'll be by to take you to movies at 3:00 PM tomorrow."

At 4:30 the little girl is still watching eagerly out the window, but nothing ever comes of it. Mom never sees that. All she ever sees is how happy the little girl is to see her when she finally does decide to show up the next day, or the next week, or the next month.

After a while we learn about those people. When they talk, we don't even bother to listen. They say whatever they have to say to get through the moment without a thought about later at all. Are you one of those people? I hope not.

For further thought

(1g) Does Job 22:27 mean God will answer our prayers if we keep our promises, **or** does it mean that God will answer our prayers by helping us keep our promises, **or** something else? Why?

(1g) Does Psalm 61:8 mean God will help us keep our promises if we praise Him, **or** does it mean keeping our promises is a way to praise Him, **or** something else? Why?

(1h) Have you ever heard the term "castle keep?" It is a fortified tower within a castle, often where they planned to make their last stand. It comes from the idea that the word "keep" also means "guard carefully." Does this information change the way you understand the term "keep your promises?" Why?

Lesson 2 - Promises of God

There are literally hundreds of promises in the Bible. Some are to specific people some are more general. A general promise is one that is given by the Holy Spirit to every believer in every age. When the author penned the promise, he set no limitations on time period or recipient.

Read the following and say if they are a promise, and if so are they a general promise for all or just to a specific person or persons.

[2A] 1 John 1:9 _____

[2B] Psalm 27:10 _____

[2C] Psalm 31:23 _____

[2D] John 4:13-14 _____

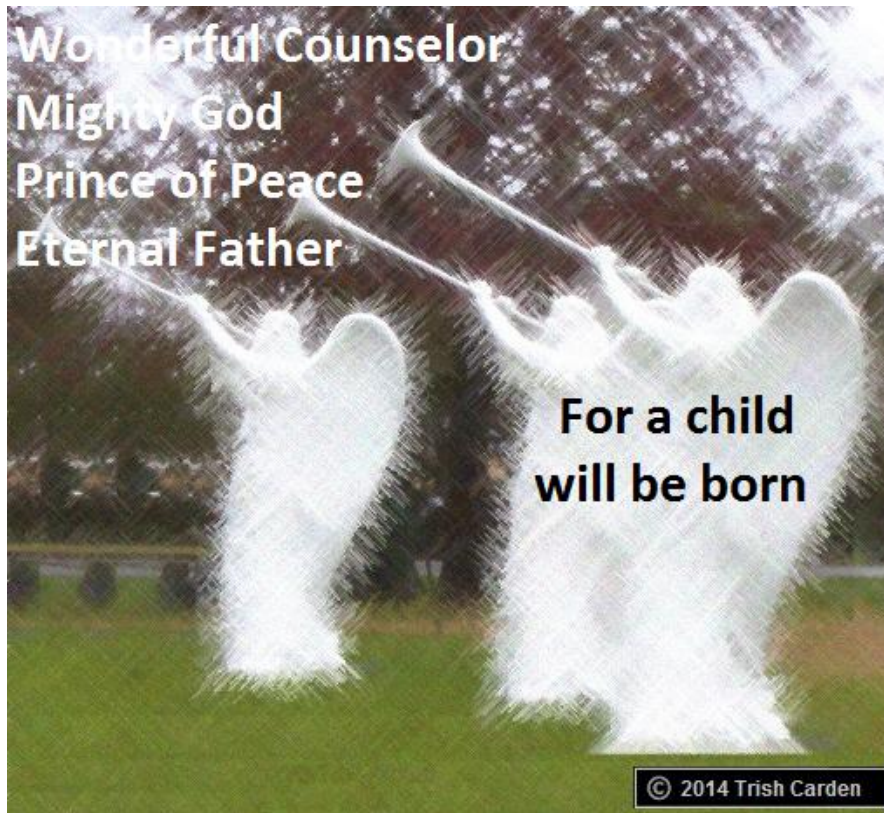
[2E] Philippians 4:7 _____

[2F] Psalm 1:3 _____

[2G] Revelation 3:20 _____

Please read Isaiah 9:6-7 and answer these two questions:

[2H] What are two of the names for THE CHILD? _____ & _____



[2I] How has this promise been kept?

Think and Pray _____

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 2 - Promises of God

[2A] 1 John 1:9 A general promise based on God's forgiving nature and is available to all believers.

[2B] Psalm 27:10 This might be a promise to the writer of the psalm or it might just be his hope.

[2C] Psalm 31:23 It is both a carrot and a stick more than it is a promise.

[2D] John 4:13-14 It is a general promise -- note the word "whoever" or "whosoever."

[2E] Phil 4:7 This promise is made to all who refusing to worry, bring their requests to God (v. 8).

[2F] Psalm 1:3 This promise is available to all who avoid sin and delight in God's laws. (v. 1-2)

[2G] Revelation 3:20 It is a general promise to anyone who opens the door of his heart to Jesus Christ.

[2H] What are two of the names for THE CHILD?

Any two of Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, or Prince of Peace. Is 9:6.

[2I] Hundreds of years later Jesus was born of a virgin. He is called all those names. He has established peace between us and God. His Spirit within us will lead us into righteousness. This is just one of the many promises of the coming Messiah. Just as God promised throughout the Old Testament Jesus came, He died on the cross, and our sins were buried with Him. He was raised to show our forgiveness. He sits at the right hand of the Father advocating for us.

For further thought:

Read the following and say if they are a promise, and if so are they a general promise for all or just to a specific person or persons.

(2j) James 5:16

(2o) Matthew 6:31-33

(2k) Revelation 2:10

(2p) 1 Corinthians 10:11-12

(2l) Jeremiah 33:3

(2q) Proverbs 3:25-26

(2m) 2 Chronicles 7:14

(2r) 1 Peter 5:6-7

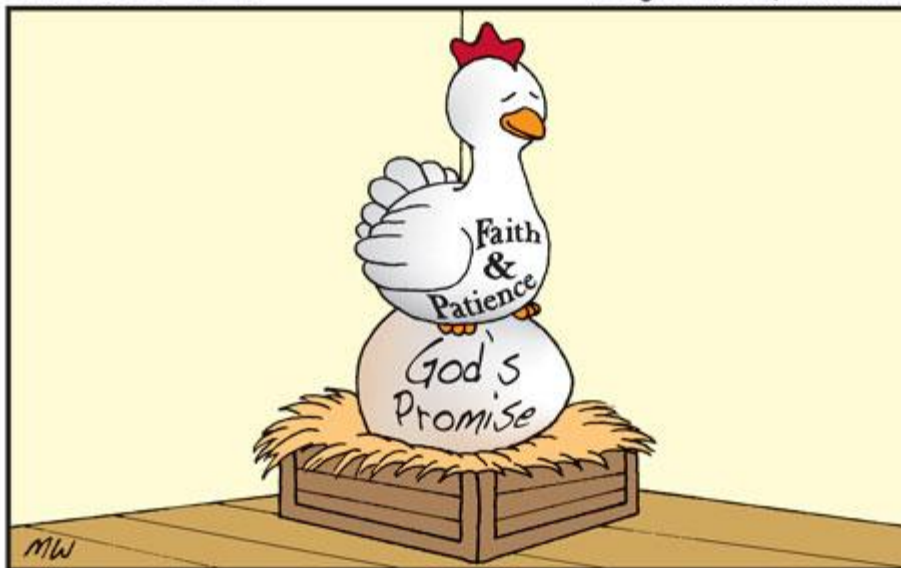
(2n) Hosea 14:1-7

(2s) Revelations 3:10

We have another series of courses available that focuses on prayers and promises in the Bible. If you enjoyed this lesson you will probably also like those courses.

PATIENT HEN

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.

- HEBREWS 6:12 NIV

Lesson 3 - Breaking Promises

Maybe you are one of these promise breaking people and you really don't mean to be. You have good intentions, you say. You mean to do what you say, but it always seems like something happens to prevent it. Something you have no control over.

James explains it another way. Please read James 4:13-16 and answer these questions.

[3A] Can you say what your life will be like tomorrow? _____

[3B] How are we like a vapor? _____

[3C] What does James call claiming to know what we are going to do in the future? _____

Please read Leviticus 19:12.

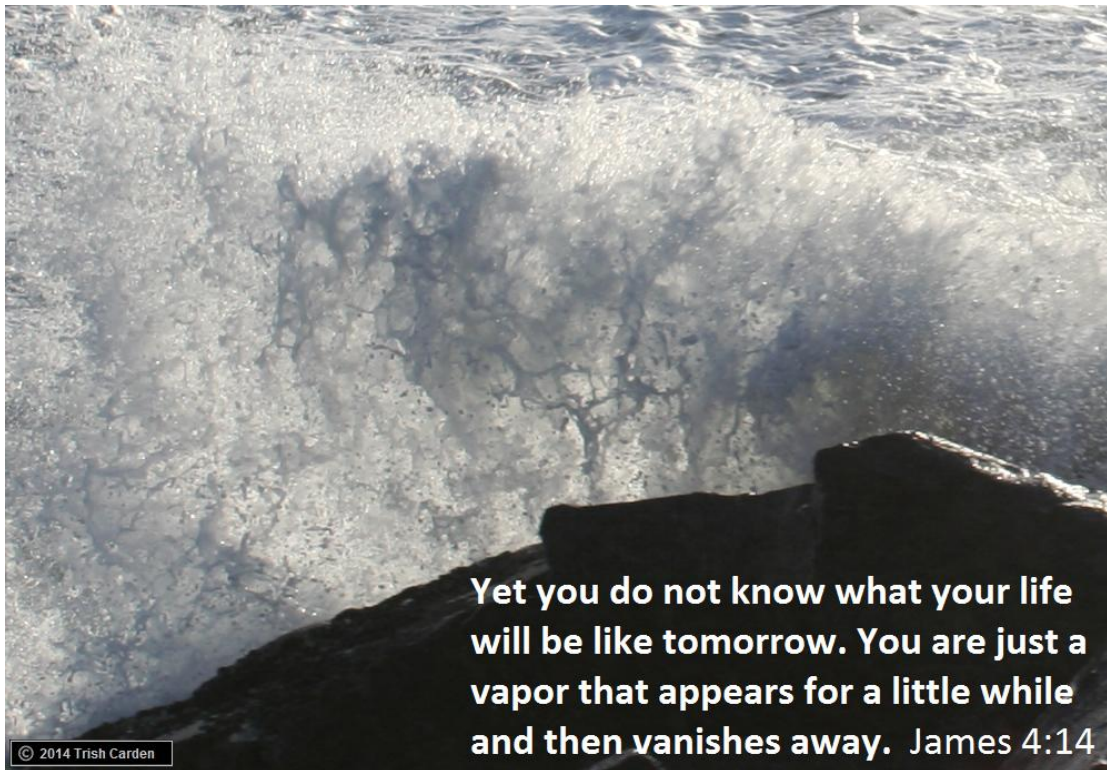
[3D] Whose reputation is hurt when Christians break their word? _____

Please read Proverbs 10:19 and answer these two questions.

[3E] What makes sin (transgression) unavoidable? _____

[3F] What is the relation between keeping our promises and Proverbs 10:19?

Think and Pray _____



For further thought:

(3g) What does Luke 12:16-21 mean?

(3h) What does Proverbs 27:1 mean?

(3i) How do Job 7:7; Psalm 39:5; Psalm 102:3; and Psalm 144:4 clarify and confirm James 4:13-16?

(3j) How does James 1:26 clarify and confirm Proverbs 10:19?

----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 3 - Breaking Promises

[3A] Can you say what your life will be like tomorrow? No Jm 4:14

[3B] How are we like a vapor? We vanish quickly Jm 4:14

[3C] What does James call claiming to know the future? Boasting, evil Jm 4:16

Not only should we keep it simple, we need to give some thought to whether we have a chance of keeping our word. You call it "having good intentions" but the Bible calls it arrogance, boasting, and pride. You meant to do it, you say.

I'm sorry. I don't believe you.

You have your whole life to guide you. You know what you are likely to be able to do, and what you are not likely to be able to do. Perhaps you have some silly notion that this time you will be able to do it, when you never have before. How about having some realistic ideas of what you are capable of doing and planning accordingly? How about having some consideration for the people around you and living in truth instead of trying to drag them into your fantasy?

It is more important than disappointing children. It is more serious than letting down your friends and loved ones. It is evil and damaging to the kingdom of God.

[3D] Whose reputation is hurt when Christians break their word? the Lord's Lv 19:12

If you break your promises how do you expect people to believe you when you tell them about Jesus Christ? They know you for a boastful breaker of promises and now you want to lead them to Jesus Christ. How is that going to work?

I know some people like this. Nothing that comes out of their mouth has anything to do with what is really likely to happen or has happened. And yet they insist on telling people they are Christians. I just want to take them aside and say, "Please, please, please stop telling people you are a Christian. You are giving us a bad name."

Are you one of those people?

Yes, I know some promises are more serious than others. I remember being invited to lunch one day and then at the last minute it was canceled. The problem was I had not brought my lunch like I usually did, and I had no money. I had to go without lunch. Maybe that doesn't measure up to betraying your marriage vows, but it is still a broken promise. If I had been a non-Christian and that person later tried to witness to me, how far would he have gotten?

Remember, it is not about you. Your life is not about you. It is about Him. We are supposed to glorify God. We are supposed to try to imitate Jesus, to be like Him.

God keeps His promises, do you?

[3E] What makes sin (transgression) unavoidable? Many words Pv 10:19

[3F] Make very few promises and keep the ones you make. Simple. Do your best to make sure what comes out of your mouth is the truth, whether it is talking about the past, present, or future. This passage is mostly about talking about the future. If you say you are going to do something do it, whether it was a casual conversation, a written agreement or a notarized contract. Keep it simple and you can avoid falling off the edge into broken promises and broken vows.

Lesson 4 - Keeping the Promise

[4A] He promised that if you will come to Him, He will save you. Romans 10:9 "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Has He kept that promise for you yet? _____

[4B] What is Jesus saying in this passage Matthew 5:33-37?

Think and Pray _____

Course Conclusion:

[X] Is there a verse we studied that would be a good idea for you to memorize? Which one.? Why?

Think and Pray _____

[Y] If someone asked you to summarize this course, what would you say?

Think and Pray _____

[Z] What did you learn in this course that you most hope to remember?

Think and Pray _____



----- ANSWERS -----

Lesson 4 - Keeping the Promise

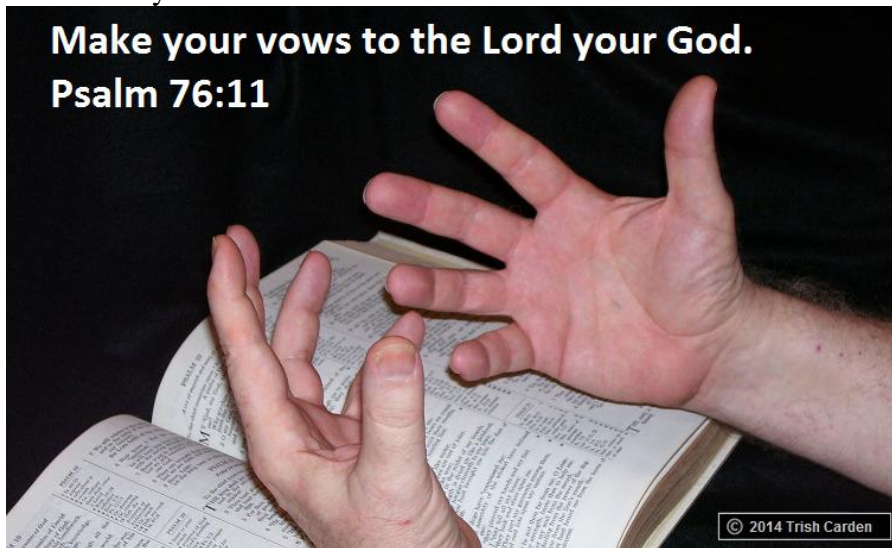
[4A] If not, could it be that you have not confessed Him and believed Him? If so, are you imitating the promise keeping of God? I need God in my life, or I can't keep promises. We all need the Holy Spirit in order to do the right thing, like tell the truth. We need His help. But even with His help, if we make too many promises, sooner or later they are going to contradict each other, and one or the other will have to be broken. God can not make a square circle, He can't make $2 + 2 = 5$, and He can't fix it so that you can keep contradicting promises. Keep it simple. Guard what you say you are going to do very carefully.

[4B] Remember the theme of Matthew chapter 5. Stay away from the edge. Don't go near sin. He is not saying to never make a promise. He is saying to be careful that what you say and what you do match up. He is saying we need to make sure everything we say is the truth, so you don't tangle yourself in a web of deceit and broken promises.

In ancient times most people could not read or write. In order to make contracts and carry on business they took oaths in front of witnesses. They had it down to an art form. The people in Jesus day had a whole system of vows and oaths you could take. Some were more solemn than others. Swearing by heaven, or by the earth, or by Jerusalem, etc. We have the same thing. We make promises. We sign written agreements. Sometimes we notarize the written agreements. Sometimes they are notarized, and have additional witnesses to sign them, as well.

Today we have unethical lawyers that help weasels get out of what they have agreed to do. They had the same thing then. People would slither out of keeping a promise by claiming that they had not taken a solemn enough oath, or that they had taken a more solemn oath that superseded the other one.

Jesus is saying don't be one of those people. And don't be one of those people that just say whatever you need to say to get people off your back. Or don't be one of those people who tell people what they want to hear, so that you get approved of right now, but you give no thought at all to whether you can actually do what you say. As the Sermon on the Mount continues, Jesus is once again telling us something very simple to understand and very difficult to do.



For further thought:

- (4c) How can we apply Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 to the our lives?
- (4d) Explain Matthew 23:16-22
- (4e) What is Psalm 66:13-14 talking about?
- (4f) Explain Psalm 50:14
- (4g) Explain Psalm 76:11
- (4h) What does Acts 5:1-11 have to do with Matthew 5:33-37 if anything?